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Rural Sustainability Workshops

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This spring, the Oregon State Library sponsored two full-day Rural Library Sustainability workshops in conjunction with the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and WebJunction. Darci Henning from the Oregon State Library organized the meetings. Corvallis-Benton County Public Library hosted the April 18, 2007 workshop as a pre-conference event to OLA. To ensure that Central and Eastern Oregon librarians could participate, the same workshop was held in Pendleton on May 5, 2007 as a post-conference event to EOLA.



Workshop Participants in Corvallis

Designed by WebJunction with funding from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, these workshops are being held across the country. The goal of the workshops is to support the efforts of rural and small

libraries—those serving 25,000 or fewer patrons—to develop and implement community-specific action plans for sustaining public access computing, including technology maintenance and planning, community outreach, advocacy and promotion, securing on-going funding, and training and support. Libraries were encouraged to send the director or other staff member and a library trustee or board member, which the majority of libraries succeeded in doing. Turnout for the workshops was substantial with 27 people attending in Pendleton and 34 in Corvallis.

Each workshop focused on the issues and challenges that library staff identified as obstacles in sustaining public access computing. The workshop format aided in bringing individuals together to discuss specific areas of concern. At the end of the day participants were able to return to their libraries with ideas, information, resources, and concrete action plans.

In addition to learning about developing action plans, participants were introduced to other resources. They learned how to use WebJunction as a way to continue their discussions and to engage with other rural librarians in online forums. Darci demonstrated the use of Plinkit (Public Library INterface KIT). This is a Web authoring tool that enables libraries to create their own professional looking Web sites. The State Library hosts the tool and the Web sites for no charge.

All in all the workshops were a success. The skills learned, although focused on sustainability for technology, will also be useful for libraries building support for other services. 

